MASONIC SERMON.

MASONIC SERMON

PREACHED BY

REV. ALLEN R. BARTHOLOMEW,

PASTOR OF

Trinity Reformed Church,

POTTSVILLE, PA.,

ON ST. JOHN'S DAY, 1891.

AT THE REQUEST OF

PULASKI LODGE, No. 216, F. and A. M.

POTTSVILLE, PA.:
EVENING CHRONICLE BOOK ROOMS.
1892.

CORRESPONDENCE.

HALL OF PULASKI LODGE, No. 216, F. & A. M.,
POTTSVILLE, 19th December, 1891.

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER:

Saint John's Day next will recur on Sunday. This Lodge as a body, according to venerable usage, desires to attend divine service: and has appointed the undersigned a committee to request you to furnish to the Craft a place in your Church, and to preach a sermon upon the occasion.

To the discharge of this pleasant duty, we beg to add the assurance of our respectful and fraternal regard.

D. D. MORETON,
D. E. NICE,
WM. L. WHITNEY, } Committee.

REV. A. R. BARTHOLOMEW,
Pottsville.

POTTSVILLE, PA., December 19, 1891.

DANIEL D. MORETON,
DECATUR E. NICE,
WILLIAM L. WHITNEY, } Committee.

DEAR BRETHREN:

Your kind favor, conveying the request that Pulaski Lodge might attend divine services at Trinity Reformed Church, on St. John's Day, is before me. Permit me to reply, that both pastor and members will gladly welcome you to the Sanctuary of the Most High.

Believe me, I am,

Fraternally Yours,

A. R. BARTHOLOMEW.

PULASKI LODGE, No. 216,
SAINT JOHN'S DAY, 1891.

REV. A. R. BARTHOLOMEW,

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER:

At a meeting, held to-day, we were directed to convey to you the thanks of the Lodge for the sermon preached by you to the Craft this morning, and to ask you to furnish a copy thereof for publication in pamphlet form. Trusting that this request will receive your favorable consideration, we are fraternally and cordially yours,

D. D. MORETON,
D. E. NICE,
WM. L. WHITNEY, } Committee.

POTTSVILLE, PA., January 1st, 1892.

DANIEL D. MORETON,
DECATUR E. NICE,
WILLIAM L. WHITNEY, } Committee.

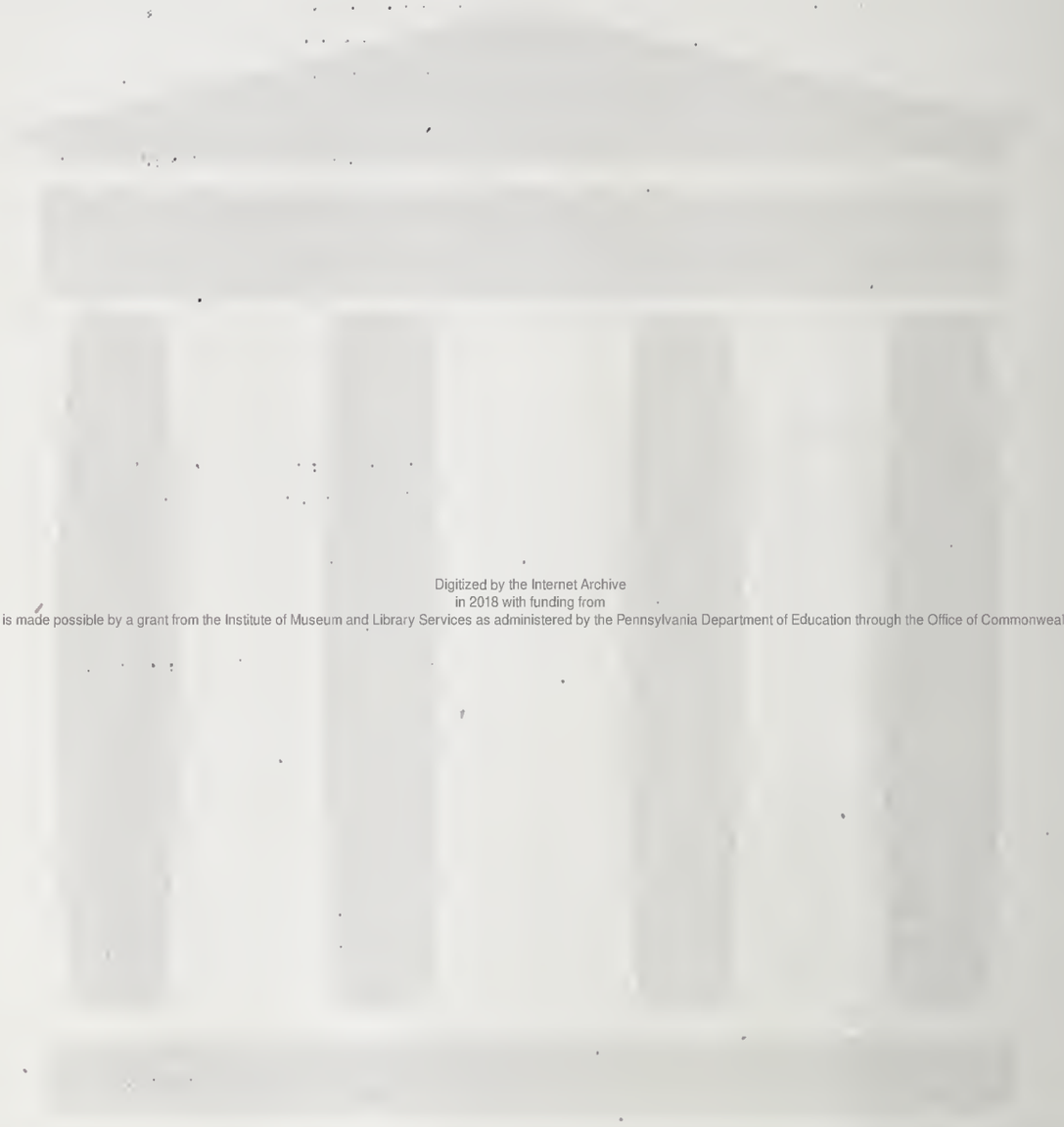
DEAR BRETHREN:

I am very grateful for your kinds words of approval of the sermon on St. John's Day. If you think a wider circulation will subserve a good purpose, I will waive my own feelings in the matter and yield to your request.

With high regards, I remain,

Fraternally Yours,

A. R. BARTHOLOMEW.



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MASONRY IS LABOR.

ECCLESIASTES, 9 CHAPTER, 10 VERSE.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest."

Among the saints of all ages no one will wear a brighter crown in glory than John, the Evangelist. He was a life-long servant of the Divine Master, an ardent student of truth, the great Apostle of love. Early in life he was chosen by the Lord as a disciple, and he continued faithful in His service until death. Of a mild, gentle, contemplative disposition, he did not, during the earthly ministry of Christ, exert as potent an influence as Peter, but he wrought his noblest and best work after his Saviour had left the earth and his older colleagues had gone to their eternal reward. There was something so genial and winning about his person that our Lord always kept him close to Him, and unto this day he is spoken of as the bosom friend of Jesus. His writings breathe a religious depth and fervor not found in any other portion of the Holy Bible. What is the secret of it? There is a law in the natural world that the amount of light and heat a planet receives depends on its nearness to the sun. The nearer it is to the sun, the more light and warmth it receives. This same law holds true in the spiritual world, and finds a fitting illustration in the life of the Holy Apostle. He was nearest to the Saviour of all the apostles, and received the most spiritual light. His gospel begins with the great mystery of Godliness—God manifest in the flesh. The same peculiarity runs through his entire gospel and epistles, and the Book of the Revelations, on the Isle of Patmos, contains some of the darkest mysteries in the Sacred Scriptures. St. John was the deepest theologian of the twelve, simply because he was nearest the Christ, the source of divine light. He who would enjoy the most light must be nearest the Master.

A TOUCHING STORY.

An old tradition has it, that John left Jerusalem, for Ephesus, twelve years after the resurrection of our Lord. There he spent the latter part of his life, having charge of the churches of Asia Minor. A touching story is told of this venerable man of God. When he was almost a hundred years old and could no longer walk and talk as he was wont to do, his friends used to carry him in their arms into the church, and there he would say no more than this, "Little children, love one another." His disciples, being wearied with hearing always the same message, said: "Master, why dost thou always say, this?" "It is the Lord's command," was his worthy reply, "and if only this be done, it is enough."

He died at an extreme old age, but we are left in ignorance concerning the nature of his death and the place of his burial. No doubt he died a natural death and was buried in peace. His name will live in the memory of God's children, and his writings will teach and bless the world till the end of time. So great has been the reverence of the early Church for this loyal and loving disciple of the Lord, that, in her Christian Calendar, and close to the Birthday of the Christ, she has set apart, this day, in memory of St. John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

MASONRY DEFINED.

I am mindful of the presence of a body of men in the audience who represent an Order which reveres the name of the Evangelist John, and, as often as this Saint's Day falls upon a Sunday, seeks the Sanctuary to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. How may we best improve the brief time that we shall sit together in heavenly places? It is not your desire nor my purpose to address you on the merits and mysteries of your Ancient Order. But I cannot forbear to say a few words in regard to the Order itself.

Masonry is not a religion. It is not a rival of the Church. It is not an enemy to Christianity. "Let no Mason ever say that Masonry is a good enough religion for him. It is not." He not only misrepresents the Order, but he deceives his own soul. There is nothing in the teachings or ritual of Masonry to stain the purest mind. Bad men may belong to the Order, but alas! it too often happens that these very persons are also members of the Church.

It has been well and truly said, "Masonry may not be able to make a bad man good, but there is nothing in Masonry to make a good man bad."

Masonry points men to a lofty and noble ideal of manhood, or else it would not claim as its patron-saints Solomon, the wise, and John, the holy. In its chosen representatives it combines the teachings of the Old and New Testaments, while it devoutly adores the one, true, living God as the Father of our spirits and the Framer of our bodies.

Masonry is an object lesson of honest and useful toil in the presence of the Master. It employs the simplest tools of the mechanic, as symbols, in the enforcement of moral truths. It challenges even the humblest toiler in his daily work with the command of Solomon, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." *Masonry is labor.* No man can be an operative Mason without hard toil. There is no room in the hive of industry for speculative drones.

THIS WORLD IS A GRAND WORK-SHOP.

God is the Great Designer and the Wise Builder of all things. He has given brain, and nerve, and muscle to man and he should spend their energy in building a character and fashioning a life that he can take with him into the eternal world. The character and the life *there* will be according to the work *here.* We cannot perfect our being in this life. Time may lay the foundation and erect the tabernacle and even inhabit the house, but eternity alone will see its full completion.

Activity is the secret of success in this life and the hope of reward in the future world. As faithful stewards of God's substance we must do good as long as we live. We all have a work to do. Every life has a plan. All things have some design. Nothing is useless. Our work is noble, also manifold. It is, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

In this brief sentence we have an outline of our work, and it must be the law of our life.

WORK IS DIGNIFIED.

Let it be borne in mind, by those who despise labor, that the Son of the Highest was born in the humble home of a working man. He was brought up as the son of human toil and spent the

greater part of His life at the carpenter's bench. As such, He became a builder of houses in His native town of Nazareth. This fact invests the square and compass, the hammer and saw, with an imperishable lustre and sheds immortal honor upon honest and useful toil. It is a great sin to be idle,—to do nothing in a world so full of needs and wants. Many people, in this century of progress, have fallen into the grievous error of the Greeks and Romans, who despised manual labor and accounted it only fit for slaves. In view of this lamentable state of things, how important that we should hold up the example of the Son of Man, whose chief delight was to serve a sin-sick and evil-smitten world. His example will always protect the dignity of honest labor. Let the carpenter at the bench, the blacksmith at his anvil, the painter with his brush, the clerk at the desk, the merchant in the store, the woman in the home, the teacher in the school, the lawyer at the bar, the physician at the sick-bed, the minister in the pulpit, let *all* the toilers in God's great workshop rejoice in their daily toils, ever remembering that the Son of God and the Son of Mary "stood at the bench and handled the tools of the carpenter."

WORK CONTRIBUTES TO THE HAPPINESS OF MAN.

It binds men together with the cords of love in the common effort to earn their daily bread. There is an inspiration in the thought, that all over this wide world, men are busied with hands and feet, hearts and tongues, in working for the glory of their common Master and the welfare of their dependent lives.

The world's great work-shop is a daily school of discipline. Here men are taught the lessons of patience, sympathy, honesty and discipline. In it men come to know each other; they rejoice with the glad and they weep with the sad. They are drawn out of the narrow limits of self, they lose those individualistic feelings which contribute to make men egotists and bigots. Their hearts expand, as the flower for the gentle baptism of the early dew, for the grace of God, and in this wise, they become more cheerful in the family, more helpful in the church, more successful in life. There is a gospel of labor as well as a gospel of grace. It bids the workman improve his talent, employ his time and adorn his handi-work.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LABOR.

Responsibility is writ en upon the brow of every toiler in the world. Man is to do what his hand findeth to do, because it is the

will of God. The Lord has given to every man a certain work and when He will come again to judge the world, He will require an account of our stewardship. He expects not only the talent or talents which He has given us, but He will also look for additional gains. *We must pay Him the principal with interest.* He bids us gain other talents. God will not be satisfied to receive us just as we came from His hands. He commands us to occupy till He come, and so to use our talents and opportunities as not to abuse them.

Great as is the responsibility of work, it is not any greater than the intense satisfaction in work when it is done and well done. "The humblest mechanic feels this pleasure when he sees the article he has been making passing out of his hands perfect. The poet surely feels it when he writes Finis at the end of the work into which he has poured the full force of his genius." Alas! how many souls miss this joy, because they do not finish what they have begun. The crown of any work is in its completion. The end crowns the work.

JOY IN SERVICE.

The mission of Christ was a service of joy as well as an errand of mercy. In His daily efforts, ministering to the poor and needy, in body and soul, He found great delight, because He was carrying forward his God-given work. And when He hung upon the shameful cross and saw the last fold in the grand design of His advent into the world unroll itself, He knew that the sacrifice of His life had been a splendid victory and He died with a shout of triumph upon his lips, "My work is done: the battle is fought; the race is run; the victory is won." But the joy of the Lord will never cease. The reward of His work will never come to an end. As His kingdom of peace extends unto the uttermost parts of the earth, as His gospel pervades the hearts and lives of men, as His grace changes the desert of sin into an Eden of holiness, and as heaven fills with the sheaves of rejoicing, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied."

In the doing of our work we must employ heart, hand and voice. The heart should be a temple for the Holy Spirit. The hand should be ever ready to relieve the sick, provide for the poor and assist the needy. The lips should proclaim the glad tidings

of great joy to a dying world, constrain men to forsake the evil, seek the good, live holy lives and hallow the name of God. Every thought and word, desire and act, should be laid on the altar of the King of Heaven. The most trivial deed will cease to be such if done with the noble intention of giving one's self up wholly to the will of God. No matter what our calling in life, be it the toil of the hand or the labor of the brain, all our work is given from the Lord, and it should be done with all our might.

THE TRUE THEORY OF LIFE.

In the great work of life we have to contend with two destructive tendencies. The one is, man can do *nothing*; the other is, man can do *everything*. The former leads to self-distrust, the latter to self-reliance. The true theory of life is the one laid down by the Apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." But the idea of man's entire dependence upon God need not, must not, disparage honest toil.

There are two instances in the word of God that furnish clear, forcible and indisputable proof of the necessity for man to rely upon the Divine help in all his labors. I refer to the building of the tower of Babel and the temple of Solomon.

THE TOWER OF BABEL.

In the first instance, the people began a magnificent work. "And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone and lime for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower; whose top may reach unto Heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." We cannot help admiring the spirit of their enterprise—"A tower, whose top may reach unto Heaven;" and their unity of sentiment —"The whole earth was of one language and of one speech;" but those ambitious builders left one great consideration out of their plans, *Is it right?* They did not consult the Lord, nor seek His help. There is no mention of a Corner-stone laying in the name of the Lord, and I ask again, *Is it right?* Our hoary ancestors did not get to Heaven on a winding staircase; they had to climb up some other way. Confusion, ruin, scatteration was the result of their foolish dream. There is an old saying: "He builds too low who builds beneath the skies." The only true and sure founda-

tion whereupon to build for time and eternity is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is of no use that we build loftily, unless we build on the Rock of ages. Alas! there are too many spiritual houses built upon the sand. And what will be the result? The fires will come, the floods will descend, the great winds will rage, and the works will perish. The tower of Babel was a big failure, because the builders left the Lord out of their calculations. *Without God we are nothing and can do nothing.*

"Trowel and hammer, saw and plane are instruments of vanity unless the Lord be the master-builder."

THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON.

Unlike this tower of folly was the temple of Solomon. The former was the work of man, the latter the work of God. The temple of Solomon was built without any reliance on human skill and strength, but with entire dependence on divine wisdom and power. The plan was given by the Lord Himself. There was no necessity for the Master-builder to worry his brains about the delicate lily-work on the pillars or the unique embroidery on the curtains. God had given the model, nothing "was left to the wit or wisdom of men." In this I find the secret why there was no noise of hammer and nail in all that building. The Lord built the house. He gave the plan. He laid the foundation. He kept the builders until the work was complete, the grandest structure ever built on the face of the whole earth. There was no need for the workmen or the watchmen to rise up early or to sit up late, or to eat the bread of sorrow.

Work for the Lord and with the Lord is pleasant, profitable and successful. No man can labor in vain in the Lord. He will give the grace "both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Let us seek His favor, dwell under the shadow of His wings and He will preserve our souls.

THE OBJECT OF LABOR.

The inspiration of all our labors should be the glory of God and the good of man. There is perhaps no better illustration of this truth in the Word of God than the considerate act of David in preparing the material for the temple. Whilst he was sitting in his house of cedar, he said to himself, "My house is a costly palace of cedar, God's house a mere tent." The idea strikes him, "Why

should I not build a grand temple on Mount Zion for the worship of God?" *David's heart was fixed on the glory of God.* The temple shall be built as a monument of the divine goodness and as an expression of devout praise. The king of Israel did not think of the temple as having to be built either for his own glory or Solomon's glory, but for the glory of God.

This should be the constraining impulse in every labor for God. To work from any other motive will rob us of our joy and the Lord of the honor due His holy name. David felt the dignity of the work in gathering the materials for "an house for thine holy name." He had a lofty idea of the work to be done; it must be carried out on a grand scale. The glory of the temple found an earnest champion in the king of Israel. He will not be satisfied with a mean house, it must be "exceeding magnifical, of fame and glory throughout all countries." The unselfish devotion of David in gathering the materials for the temple appears in bold relief when we hear the Lord saying to him, "Thou shalt not build an house for my name because thou hast been a man of war and hast shed blood." The house of God shall be built by a peaceful man, because it shall foreshadow the reign of peace among Israel. "The corner-stone must be laid by a hand that had never been stained with blood." Solomon, the man of peace, was to build it.

THE GREATER GLORY OF DAVID.

Although David cannot build nor have the honor of building the house of the Lord, he will have the greater joy and the lasting honor of gathering the materials for it. He not only gave to Solomon the pattern of the temple and the furniture it should contain, which he had received from God, but he set himself with liberal, earnest zeal to the preparing the material of every kind, the gold and silver and iron and wood and precious stones. He had in his possession many valuable treasures which he laid at the feet of the Lord. And lo! when the time came for the building of the temple under the reign of Solomon all the necessary preparations had been made.

David did not grow sour when the Lord told him that he could not build Him an house. Many people would have said: "If I cannot have my own way in this matter I will do nothing." It is remarkable how men try to hide themselves behind vain excuses

Though their consciences accuse them, yet they still refuse to serve God with a perfect heart. And yet this is the spirit of our holy religion. It must be our delight to please the Lord and to do His will in all things. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

DEATH STOPS WORK.

Life is the only opportunity to do what the hand findeth to do. "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." A "greater than Solomon," even Jesus the Christ, hath said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." As every man has a work to do, so he has also a time to die. When the angel of death will sound the knell of our parting day is unknown to us. It may be soon, sooner than our age, health or wishes, may call for. One thing is sure—certain, there will be no work in the grave. Death puts a stop to man's work. Then either he will have done, or, left undone, the work which was given him to do by the Divine Master. We cannot work out our salvation in the grave, neither can we help others. The rich man might have fed Lazarus with the crumbs which fell from his table in this world, but the poor man could not so much as dip his finger in water to cool the burning tongue of Dives in the realm of death. *To-day* is the convenient season for us to do good. *Now* is the opportune time to make our calling and election sure.

THE WISE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER.

My dear brethren; I need not remind you of the sober truth that there is nothing enduring but God, Heaven and Life. All human societies will pass away. The lodge can follow a brother, with its counsel, sympathy, and aid to the grave, but beyond the confines of that narrow cell no voice can penetrate, no eye can follow, no arm can support. In the passage from time into eternity we need the presence, comfort and help of the Saviour, who is the Resurrection and the Life. David sang in the prospect of death—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." The Lord alone can lead us in life and keep us in death. Your own experience has taught

you that man groping in the dark seeks, craves and asks for light. And Oh! what a joy and comfort it is, as the scales drop from off his eyes, to see the Holy Bible, a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path.

Masonry is a pleasant, delightful and profitable school of discipline for the mind, but it is not worth the whole life, and entire consecration of any man. It cannot save the soul. He who is not led from the altar in the lodge to the throne of Grace, fails to grasp the true principles and improve the wise teachings of Masonry. Let your undying souls busy themselves with the things which endure forever. And the only things which are immortal are God, His Word, His Church, and His people. Of Himself He says, "I am the Lord, I change not." Of His word He says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." Of His Church He says, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Of His people He says, "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

Masonry offers men knowledge, recreation, help, but it does not pretend to give life. *Life is the gift of God.* May the Source of all Wisdom give you grace at this service to realize in your hearts that you need this life, this life of Jesus in your lives. And with this truth uppermost in our minds, let us adopt the words of the poet as the burden of our prayer at the throne of heavenly grace:

"O Love divine, how sweet thou art!
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by thee?
I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The greatness of redeeming love;
The love of Christ to me.

O that I could, with favor'd John,
Recline my weary head upon
The dear Redeemer's breast!
From care, and sin, and sorrow free,
Give me, O Lord, to find in thee
My everlasting rest!

Only Thy love do I require,
Nothing on earth below desire,
But this in Heav'n above;
Let earth and Heav'n, and all things go,
Give me Thy only love to know,
Impart to me Thy love."